



Minister for Local Government,
Minister for Racing and
Minister for Multicultural Affairs

Our ref: MC18/5923

Your ref: A371007

17 OCT 2018

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Dear Neil

Thank you for your letter of 25 September 2018 about petition numbers 3010-18 and 2978-18 received by the Queensland Legislative Assembly on 18 September 2018 drawing attention to the Southern Downs Regional Council's Invasive Pest Management Scheme (IPCS) and requesting legislation to prevent Local Governments from imposing fines of any sort for the inability to control invasive pests.

While the Government has no current plans to legislate in the way suggested by the petitioners, the view of petitioners will be taken into account within the context of any future legislative reforms in this area.

I acknowledge the concerns of the petitioners regarding the Council's decision to introduce the IPCS and the IPCS Levy (the Levy), given the petitioners believe that the IPCS: (1) is penalties-based and should be replaced by an incentive-based scheme, (2) fails to control pests on Crown land controlled by the State Government and the Council, and (3) does not allow for landowners to retain tree pear and other edible species for cattle fodder.

The IPCS places responsibility for identifying and controlling invasive pests upon landholders. This approach was taken as the result of community concerns and is in line with the general biosecurity obligation imposed by the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, which is under the portfolio responsibilities of the Honourable Mark Furner MP, Minister for Agricultural Industry Development and Fisheries.

I am advised that the IPCS was developed in consultation with over 450 people from across the Southern Downs Region and it was introduced in June 2017. The Council assists landholders to meet their invasive pest control obligations through provision of advice, identification of pest and weeds, best practice control methods and other initiatives.

The Council introduced the Levy as a Special Charge applied to all relevant land. Landowners who demonstrate they have met their invasive pest control obligations receive a 100 per cent Levy concession. Landowners who do not meet their invasive pest control obligations are charged the Levy through a Supplementary Rates Notice.

In June 2018, the Council advised that over 90 per cent of affected landowners had provided the required Control Works Form, which either indicates they do not have invasive pests on their land or identifies invasive pests and proposed management works.

In this instance, both the introduction of the IPCS and the imposition of the Levy are operational decisions and solely matters for the Council to decide. The *Local Government Act 2009* empowers Councils to impose special rates or levies to provide services to their local communities and it also prescribes the process by which these can be imposed. I am advised by the Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural Affairs that the process to adopt the IPCS and the Levy appear lawful and within the legislative responsibilities of the Council.

As these are decisions for the Council, any residents or landholders with concerns regarding the IPCS or the Levy should contact the Council.

I would like to thank the petitioners for raising these matters with me and I trust this information is of assistance.

In accordance with Standing Order 32, I request this response to be tabled in the Legislative Assembly on 18 October 2018.

Yours sincerely



STIRLING HINCHLIFFE MP
Minister for Local Government,
Minister for Racing and
Minister for Multicultural Affairs